



Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail



A progress report on the status of the Trail

Vol. 4, No. 1

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On the Path

Welcome to the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail.

Five years ago, many people now reading this publication may not have even heard of this Trail, though it was authorized by the United States Congress in 1980. But today, more and more people and communities are partnering with the National Park Service to help tell the story of the Overmountain Men of 1780. Together partners are adding more certified trail segments and hosting special events and programs all along the historic route to help commemorate this important event in America's fight for independence over 225 years ago. This year's Progress Report shares stories from all along the Trail about the efforts of communities to increase the visibility of the Trail and to share its historic legacy. Through the end of 2007, we now have 67 miles of certified trail available for public use. This is four times the total amount certified by 2002! The OVNHT is continuing to grow; and, we are pleased to welcome all who come to experience its story, to enjoy its beauty, and to travel the same historic path as those Patriot heroes.

We hope you enjoy your visit. Please linger and explore some or all of the 330 miles that make up the Overmountain Victory NHT. The Trail reveals a remarkable tale, step by step.

- Paul Carson, Superintendent

History in the Hallways

New trail segment runs near Bluff City Middle School

While changing classes, the students of Bluff City Middle School will be walking in history.

The first certified section of the OVNHT in Sullivan Co., TN was celebrated at a ceremony on September 24



The 400 students of BCMS watch OVTA marchers fire a commemorative volley at their school.



Receiving the Trail Certificate are Lt. Gov. Ron Ramsey; Ambre Torbett, Sullivan Co. Planning Director; Robert Thomas, Mayor; Betty Combs, Board of Education; Tom Anderson, Vice Mayor.

in Bluff City. The historic route followed by the Virginia volunteers on their way to muster at Sycamore Shoals ran southwest from Choate's Ford and continued along where the middle school buildings now sit.

"We are installing commemorative brass caps in the floor of the halls to let students know

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Exhibiting Courage—an Easy Touch

A new display at W. Kerr Scott Dam & Reservoir

Visitors to the Yadkin River Valley can now get a feel for the Overmountain Men. A new educational exhibit with many "touchables" was erected in September at the W Kerr Scott Dam & Reservoir Visitor Center. Filling an entire wall of the existing museum that presents displays on natural history, the new exhibit includes a



R.G. Absher inspects the new exhibit at W. Kerr Scott Dam & Reservoir Visitor Center.

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Gathering Ground

The Mustering Ground preserved by Town of Abingdon

The resolve and commitment of individuals, a family, and a community were celebrated on Saturday, September 22 when the “hallowed and sacred ground” along Wolf Creek was transferred to the Town of Abingdon and certified as “the Mustering Ground,” the northern-most, official trail head of the OVNHT.



Mayor Lois Humphreys (in colonial attire) recognizes the 50-year stewardship of The Mustering Ground by Paula Dunn Hoskins (l) and Rose Dunn. (photo: Myra Cook)

During more than fifty years, the Paul and Rose Dunn family and the Mike and Paula Dunn Hoskins family have watched over the nine-acre meadow where the 400-man Virginia militia under William Campbell and Arthur Campbell mustered on September 24, 1780. At the time, it was known as Craig’s Meadow; Capts. Robert Craig and David Craig rode with the Overmountain Men to Kings Mountain.

Town Manager Greg Kelly welcomed some 200 citizens attending the dedication ceremony in front of “Retirement,” the 200-year old house adjacent to the meadow and the subject of planning for its future use to help interpret the story of the Overmountain Men of 1780 for visitors. “The Town is delighted to become the new owner of this honored tract,” he said, “and, we will put it and its history to good use for the community and for future

generations of Americans.” “The Mustering Ground” was again this year the site of educational programs for school groups from across Washington and Russell counties during the four-day observance.

During the ceremony, Rose Dunn expressed her appreciation to the Town of Abingdon for purchasing the property so that it could continue to be preserved. The mayor noted, “I know this is a bitter-sweet day for the



The Mustering Ground in Abingdon is graced with a new marker commemorating the Virginia Patriot Militiamen, including the Edmiston, who mustered in 1780.

In connection with this dedication, The Historical Society of Washington County erected a plaque at The Mustering Ground to honor all the patriots who gathered there, but specifically members of the Edmiston (also Edmisten and Edmondson) family. One-third of the men killed at the Battle of King’s Mountain were Virginia militia. Joella Bourbor, a member of the Society and a descendent of the Edmiston family attended. In addition, OVTA presented Washington County native, Blair Keller, with a Lifetime Service award for his work to tell the Story of the Overmountain Men of 1780, to help create the significance and preservation of The Mustering Ground. ●



Accepting the NPS certificate are (l to r) Vice Mayor Bob Howard, Council Member Ed Morgan, Council Member Cathy Castle-Lowe, Council Member French Moore, Jr., and Town Manager Greg W. Kelly. (photo: Myra Cook)

Dunn and Hoskins families who have lived adjacent to this historic meadow beside which they reared their families. The Town of Abingdon promises to take great care of this historical treasure your family has so long protected. We thank you for your years of careful stewardship.”

Paul Carson, Superintendent, OVNHT, presented a framed certificate to Mayor Humphreys officially certifying The Mustering Ground as part of the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail.



Longtime OVNHT champion and Washington County resident Blair Keller stands next to Wolf Creek where he was honored for his decades of work to commemorate the Overmountain Men of 1780.

Enthusiasm Flows in the Yadkin Valley

Four more miles added to the eastern leg of OVNHT

The communities along the eastern leg of the OVNHT are continuing to tell the story of the Overmountain Men of 1780 by



Paul Carson, center, presented certificates for new trail segments to (l to r) Janet Lyon-Cardwell and Alison Pipes, Yadkin River Greenway Council; Teresa Howell, Town of Elkin; Frieda Matthews, Lisa Lauenberg, and John Gyax, Yadkin River Greenway Council. (photo: Donna Absher)

putting official trail on the ground in their own backyards. New trail segments were certified in a September 29 ceremony at the W. Kerr Scott Dam & Reservoir Visitor Center that included a performance by the Guilford Courthouse Fife & Drum Corps.

“This year we added about four more miles of certified trail,” said R.G. Absher, “including on land owned by Rick and Maricela Chatham. We are also excited about a second small tract

that is the first segment certified between Elkin and Wilkesboro. We hope the initiative by Rev. Bill and Ruth Anne Johnson will spark more residents along this stretch to join in the spirit of establishing trail along the river.”

In addition, the Corps of Engineers added 2.7 miles adjacent to the lake and the Yadkin River Greenway added 1.1 miles. The 80-mile eastern leg of the OVNHT

now has about 15 miles of walkable trail with public access. Trail advocates are convinced that number will most certainly increase in the future. Local leaders note that the communities of the Yadkin Valley were among the earliest who stepped forward to start putting certified segments of the OVNHT on the ground.

At the ceremony, Paul Carson, OVNHT Superintendent, thanked Operations Manager Terry Ramsey

and R.G. Absher for their continued leadership in the community on behalf of the OVNHT and especially noted their planning work for the Yadkin River Heritage Corridor, an initiative of the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area. Through that planning effort, increased partnerships across county



Rev. Dr. Bill and Ruth Anne Johnson, of Ronda, are the first to certify a trail segment between Elkin and Wilkesboro.
- photo: Donna Absher



Guilford Courthouse Fife & Drum Corps performed at the September 29th ceremony.

lines will promote economic development, tourism, recreation, and the responsible stewardship of natural and cultural resources in the valley. All these factors relate to helping establish the OVNHT along the Yadkin River.

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replica Pennsylvania long rifle, a barrel canteen, a hunting knife, and a throwing axe. “Because this was not an encampment site,” said R.G. Absher, Assistant Operations Manager of the Corps of Engineers’ W. Kerr Scott Dam and Reservoir, “we wanted the exhibit to focus on the equipment that the Overmountain Men were carrying and on their route as they passed through here.” The exhibit also poses questions whose answers are found hidden beneath hinged doors which visitors can open.

The wall graphics in the display portray the Overmountain Men on

horseback riding through the snow. “You can see their breath condensing,” said Absher. “You really get a sense of how cold they were.” He added, “We have on display too an actual artifact from the

battlefield at Kings Mountain National Military Park: a deformed “bullet,” if you will, a piece of lead shot that was loaded into and fired from someone’s muzzle loading rifle



Visitors can test their knowledge of the Overmountain Men and lift a replica long rifle to experience its nine pounds.

or musket.”

The exhibit was dedicated on Saturday, September 29 following two years of planning. It was created by the interpretation and media staff at the National Park Service’s Harper Ferry Center with

input from OVNHT and the local Corps of Engineers staff. Contact the site for more information at www.saw.usace.army.mil/wkscott/. ●



Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail

This is the story of the Overmountain Men of 1780 and how they helped win America's independence.

Late September 1780

September 12, Burke County (NC) militiamen under the command of Charles McDowell skirmished with a part of Ferguson's Loyalist army at Cane Creek, then retreat over the Appalachian Mountains to Sycamore Shoals.

As a prisoner of war released by British Major Patrick Ferguson, Patriot militiaman Samuel Phillips delivers Ferguson's threatening message to Isaac Shelby in the overmountain regions of NC. Isaac Shelby rides 40 miles to the home of John Sevier to talk about the threat. The men agree to send messengers to call for a muster of militia at Sycamore Shoals (today's Elizabethton, TN).

September 24 – Colonel William Campbell leaves Craig's Meadow (today's Abingdon, VA) with 200 Virginia militiamen. Colonel Arthur Campbell leads another group of 200. They ride along the Watauga Road.

September 25 – Four-hundred eighty militiamen from the Overmountain regions of North Carolina (today's Tennessee) muster at Sycamore Shoals with the militiamen from Virginia and 160 militiamen from Burke Co., NC.

September 26 – The Overmountain Men ride toward the mountains driving a herd of cattle to feed their army; they camp at Shelving Rock, storing their powder beneath the rock ledge to keep it dry.

September 27 – Overmountain Men "Cross the Roan" through the Yellow Mountain Gap after slaughtering beeves and preparing the meat. At the top of the mountain saddle, they parade in "snow shoe-mouth deep" and take roll. Two men with Tory leanings are discovered missing. The Overmountain Men camp along Roaring River. Meanwhile, in the northern piedmont of North Carolina, 350 Wilkes-Surry Patriot militia under the command of Major Joseph Winston and Colonel Benjamin Cleaveland ride upstream along the Yadkin River toward Quaker Meadows.

September 28 – Overmountain Men move south along the North Toe River and camp where it joins Grassy Creek (near today's Spruce Pine).

September 29 – Patriots divide into two groups near Gillespie Gap and descend the Blue Ridge Mountains following separate routes; they camp at Turkey Cove and North Cove.

September 30 – The two groups of Overmountain Men ride along separate routes near the Catawba River and reunite along the way. They camp at Quaker Meadows where they are joined by the Wilkes-Surry militia and others. The spirit of the men is lifted as the band of Patriots grows in number.



Craig's (Dunn's) Meadow, Abingdon, VA



Campbell G Seven Mile



Yellow Mountain Gap Road, Roan Mountain, TN



Sycamore Shoals State Historic Site, Elizabethton, TN



Pisgah National Forest near Lake James, Marion, NC



Museum of NC Minerals at Gillespie Gap, Spruce Pine, NC



Brittain Church Cemetery Rutherford Co., NC



Furnace Mill, Cherokee Co., SC



Grave Site,
Ford, VA



Yadkin River Greenway,
North Wilkesboro, NC



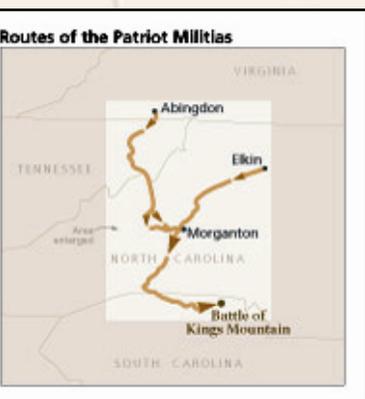
OVNHT along Yadkin River,
Elkin, NC



W. Kerr Scott Dam & Reservoir,
Wilkes Co, NC



Catawba River Greenway
Morganton, NC



Kings Mountain
National Military Park,
York Co., SC

October 1 – The combined army of over 1400 militiamen head south toward Gilbert Town (near today’s Rutherfordton) where they expect to find Ferguson’s army. Because of heavy rain, the Patriots stop in the late afternoon at Bedford Hill in South Mountain Gap.

October 2 – Continuing rain keeps the men in camp this day. The Patriot leaders meet and elect William Campbell as their commander.

October 3 – The Patriot militiamen prepare for battle and move toward Gilbert Town along Cane Creek. They do not pitch camp; the men sleep on their arms.

October 4 – The Patriots arrive in Gilbert Town to find that Ferguson is already gone. The militia leaders send out scouts and continue south to learn if Ferguson is heading for the fort at Ninety-Six (SC) or for Charlotte (NC).

October 5 – The Patriots head southwest and camp at Alexander’s Ford on the Green River. They learn from scouts that Ferguson is marching toward Charlotte and the protection of Cornwallis’s army.

October 6 – The Patriots ride southeast toward Cowpens where they are joined by militiamen from South Carolina, Georgia and Lincoln Co., NC. They learn that Ferguson is only 35 miles away, camped at Kings Mountain. The leaders pick the 900 best marksmen and the 900 fastest horses. At 9:00 P.M. these Patriot militiamen ride into the night as a cold rain continues to fall.

October 7 – Having ridden all night and forded the rain-swollen Broad River, the Patriot army encircles Kings Mountain at 3:00 pm and in “one heroic hour” captures or kills—including the despised Patrick Ferguson—the entire Loyalist Army. The Patriot losses are small: 28 killed and 62 wounded. The Loyalists suffer more: 150 killed, 150 wounded, some 800 captured. Cornwallis’s left flank is destroyed.

Epilogue – With this Patriot victory at Kings Mountain, the British found it harder to muster Loyalists. After subsequent battles at Cowpens and Guilford Courthouse, Cornwallis decided he could not subdue North Carolina. He moved into Virginia; just 12 months and 12 days after the Battle of Kings Mountain, Cornwallis surrendered the British forces to the Continental Army under General George Washington, on Oct. 19, 1781 at Yorktown, VA. ●

New OVNHT Brochure

During 2007, the NPS Harpers Ferry Center completed a new brochure for the Overmountain Victory NHT. It includes the detailed base map shown at left (completed in 2006), and interprets more history of the backcountry and piedmont patriots as well as the Southern Campaign. ●



A New Direction, a New Trail

Polk County commemorates its historic role

The citizens and leaders of Polk County are eager to preserve their historic heritage. They've recognized three miles of certified trail in the community and are raising funds to preserve Alexander's Ford.

"Alexander's Ford is significant to the story of the Overmountain Men," Ambrose Mills told the county's

commissioners at a recent meeting. "This is the site of the October 5th encampment when the Patriot militiamen received information that caused them to turn in a new direction in their pursuit of Major Patrick Ferguson." Mills is chairman of the heritage committee of the Polk County Economic Development Commission. He is also the 5th-great-grandson and namesake of Colonel Ambrose Mills, a Loyalist leader at Kings Mountain, who was hurriedly

hanged by the emotionally overwrought Overmountain Men on October 14, a week after the battle.

The citizens of Polk County have stepped forward with contributions to purchase 164 acres of pristine land near and along the Green River

that will preserve Alexander's Ford within the Bradley Nature Preserve. Polk County produced a promotional video to encourage donations to purchase the land. Following a patriotic presentation by Senator James T. Broyhill on the Overmountain Men and the OVNHT, which became a National Historic Trail in 1980 under his legislation, some contributors doubled their previous pledges.

Three miles of the OVNHT were certified this fall in Polk County along Sandy Plains Road. A 1.9-mile segment runs through the property of White Oak Development where it crosses White Oak Creek. The developers hosted White Oak Heritage Day, a public celebration, on October 6 as part of the certification celebration. "We are



1.9 miles of the OVNHT crosses the White Oak Development in eastern Polk County.

honored to have this historic route commemorated as part of our residential community," said Gene Kinsella, White Oak developer. Another mile-long segment, south of Sandy Plains Road, crosses Overmountain Vineyards. Owners Frank and Lita Lilly changed the vineyard's name to honor the Patriot

militiamen who rode there in 1780. The citizens of Polk County are embracing the OVNHT and look forward to certifying additional Trail segments. ●



Board Chairman Tommy Melton presents a commemorative powder horn to Sen. Broyhill.

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they are walking on historic ground," said Jack Walling, principal of Bluff City Middle School.

"We're also stenciling the OVNHT logo on our sidewalks," added Tom Anderson, vice-mayor of Bluff City, "so that residents and visitors can follow the non-motorized certified trail across a suspension footbridge over the South Holston River near Choate's Ford and through our community."

The entire school body of some 400 students gathered on the football field for a program dedicating a new, certified segment of the OVNHT.

Reenactors from the Overmountain Victory Trail Association, Inc. presented a brief telling of the story of the Overmountain Men of 1780 and fired volleys of black powder to honor the Patriots. The students were also treated to remarks by Tennessee Lt. Governor Ron Ramsey who grew up not far from Bluff City. Referring to the threat issued in 1780 by British Major Patrick Ferguson, Lt. Gov. Ramsey said, "We didn't take too kindly to



OVNHT logo is stenciled on Bluff City sidewalks.

such talk, so in the fashion of good Patriot volunteers we went over the mountains and whipped the British Loyalists."

Ambre Torbett, Sullivan County Planning Director, asked city officials to request certification of the non-motorized trail section through Bluff City. Reminding the students that President Thomas Jefferson later called these events the "turning of the tide in America's fight for independence, Ms. Torbett presented educational posters and other material to Principal Walling so students can continue to learn about the historic events commemorated by the OVNHT. ●

“Lost Town” Rediscovered

Community explores historic Rutherford County site

Gilbert Town is being rediscovered. The 18th century “lost town” with historical significance to the Revolutionary War may soon once again find itself “on the map.”

Following its successful addition to the National Register of Historic Places, Gilbert Town will be the subject of a study in 2007 and 2008. “Rutherford County was awarded this year a grant from the American Battlefield Protection Program to fund an evaluation of the site and to create a long term plan for its celebration as a part of America’s heritage,” said Jerry Stensland, Recreational, Cultural, and Heritage Planner for Rutherford County.

The county applied for the \$17,000 grant in January 2007. It will pay for a study to develop a long term plan for the preservation of Gilbert Town, a key cross roads in the North Carolina backcountry during the American Revolution. It lay just northeast of today’s Rutherfordton.

“All the land for Gilbert Town,” said Stensland, “is privately owned by twenty-some separate owners.

Whatever we do to commemorate the site will be done in concert with their wishes and will respect the property rights of the owners. Some are interested in preserving the rural nature of the landscape with a

commemoration of Gilbert Town.”



Jerry Stensland is working with Rutherford Co. property owners to commemorate Gilbert Town.

Crescent Resources, a developer of land around Lake James in Burke County, was recognized this year for its commitment to preserving the legacy of the Overmountain Men. In 2006, Crescent Resources incorporated a mile of the OVNHT into development plans and intends to add another mile-and-a-half during future development. To commemorate the campaign of the Overmountain Men, Crescent Resources named its development *1780*.

Paul Carson, OVNHT Superintendent, presented the NPS Achievement Award for 2007 at the annual, Oct. 7 commemorative ceremony at Kings Mountain National Military Park (KMNMP). In presenting the award, he said, “Crescent Resources’ efforts reflect a commitment to the future while showing sensitivity to the past. By incorporating and embracing the story

Rutherford County already has some certified segments of the OVNHT in Ruth and Rutherfordton. The community has interest in adding more trail segments across the county that can be certified in the future. A consultant will be selected during the fall of 2007 and will have 10 to 12 months to conduct the study and to prepare the report. ●

A Developing Story

Crescent Resources receives Achievement Award from NPS

of the Overmountain men into your plans you have demonstrated that development does not have to be equated with destruction and that smart growth can be achieved..”

Troy Lucas, vice president, Residential Division, Crescent Resources, said, “We are honored to be stewards of land on which the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail falls.”●



Jennifer King, Camp Lake James Director, Troy Lucas, VP Residential Division, and Will Yeager, Lake James Project Manager accepted the award at KMNMP.

Hiking History

Those attending the annual commemoration ceremony at Kings Mountain National Military Park on Oct. 7, 2007 were present for a real treat. Attending the event were two members of a three-generation family



Paul Carson, OVNHT Superintendent, visits with veteran OVT hikers Andrea Kiser and her mother, Lottie Bennett.

who hiked the Overmountain Victory Trail during the six years before Congress designated it a National Historic Trail in 1980. Andrea Kiser and her mother, Lottie Bennett, 96, attended the ceremony. This Morganton family walked the more-than-200-miles from Sycamore Shoals to Kings Mountain every year from 1975 to 1980. The late Hugh Bennett was grand marshal in 1979. ●

Patriots for Partners

Trail partners are taking big steps together

Business consultants tell us that an organization is formed when a task is more than one person can do alone. That is certainly true when it comes to building the OVNHT. Today, dozens of organizations are working together across four states to build the commemorative Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail (OVNHT). In fact, today the Trail has well over 100 partners and more are joining every month! Here are some of them:

Virginia

Numerous Private Landowners
Virginia DOT
Virginia Department of Tourism
Virginia Department of Historical Resources
Smyth County
Town of Abingdon
Washington County
Historical Society of Washington County



Tennessee

Numerous Private Landowners
Tennessee DOT
Town of Elizabethton
Town of Bluff City
Carter County
Sullivan County
Southern Appalachian Greenway Alliance
Tennessee Department of Tourism
Roan Mountain State Park
Sycamore Shoals State Historic Area
Rocky Mount State Historic Site
Hampton Creek Cove State Natural Area
Cherokee National Forest – U.S.F.S
Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy
Appalachian National Scenic Trail—NPS
Appalachian Trail Club



North Carolina

Numerous Private Landowners
NCDOT
NC Dept. of Cultural Resources
NC Dept. of Tourism
Pisgah National Forest – U.S. Forest Service
Blue Ridge Parkway – NPS
The Altapass Foundation
McDowell County
Wilkes County
Brittain Church
McDowell County Historical Society
Historic Burke Foundation, Inc.
Wilkes County Historical Society
Surry County Historical Society
Rutherford County Historical Society
Lake James State Park
Fort Defiance Historic Site
Yadkin River Greenway
Catawba River Greenway
Duke Energy Company
Crescent Land Corp.
Wilkes County Heritage Museum
Unimin Corporation
Catawba-Wataree Relicensing Coalition
Rutherford County
Polk County
City of Morganton
City of Kings Mountain
Town of Elkin
Town of Rutherfordton
Town of Ruth
County of Burke
Wake Forest University
Piedmont Land Conservancy
Foothills Land Conservancy
Mountain to the Sea Trail
Kings Mountain Gateway Committee
Betchler Development Corporation
Brushy Mountain Cyclists Club



W. Kerr Scott Reservoir – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Yadkin River Heritage Corridor
Foothills Nature Science Society
Blue Ridge National Heritage Area
NC State University
White Oak Development
Overmountain Vineyards
The Bradley Fund, LLC
Conservation Trust for NC
Avery County
Mitchell County
High Country Council of Governments
Caldwell County
Surry County

South Carolina

Numerous Private Landowners
SCDOT
SC Department of Tourism
Cowpens National Battlefield – NPS
Kings Mountain NMP – NPS
Kings Mountain State Park
SC Department of Parks
Overmountain Victory Trail Committee
Cherokee County
Spartanburg County
Town of Gaffney
Carolina Backcountry Alliance
The Palmetto Conservation Foundation
Colonial Pipeline Company
Cherokee County Historical Society



All States

Overmountain Victory Trail Association, Inc.
Federal Highway Administration
Daughters of the American Revolution
Sons of the American Revolution
American Hiking Society
HistoryAmerica Tours
American Battlefield Protection Program
Eastern National Monument Association
National Park Foundation
Student Conservation Association



For more information about being a Trail Partner, contact:

Paul Carson, Superintendent
Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail
2635 Park Road
Blacksburg, SC 29702

(864) 936-3477
www.NPS.gov/ovvi



With so many interested parties working together on the OVNHT, we should not be surprised to see major elements of the Trail becoming a reality every year. It is indeed an exciting time to be involved with building the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail. ●

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The OVNHT also congratulated W. Kerr Scott Dam & Reservoir on its recognition by the Corps of Engineers as the 2007 Natural Resources Management Project of the Year. They received this title from among all the Corps of Engineer installations including dams, channels, locks, wetlands and all navigable waters (i.e., “projects”) from across the United States. “This is a most notable achievement,” said Paul Carson, “and we are proud to have them as an important partner in the OVNHT. We congratulate Terry Ramsey, R.G. Absher and the entire staff at W Kerr Scott Dam & Reservoir.” ●